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ABSTRACT

This final report describes the activities and outcomes of a federally funded program designed to improve the quality of personnel preparation in the State of Florida and in the nation. The project supported students of Haitian background to participate in a master's degree program aimed at preparing highly skilled teachers of young children with disabilities, many of whom may come from homes where English is not the only language. While a portion of the coursework focused on infants and toddlers ages birth through 2, the major focus was to prepare personnel to work with children with disabilities ages 3 through 5. This interdisciplinary program consisted of specialized courses in early childhood special education (ECSE), specialized courses in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), and supervised practicums in schools and centers serving young children with disabilities (birth to five) and their families. Evaluation results describing the strengths and weaknesses of the program and recommendations for improvement are included. (SG)

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TRAINING HAITIAN TEACHERS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION/TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES MASTER'S DEGREE

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
FINAL REPORT

Project Funding Period – 5/1/98 – 4/30/02
No-Cost Extension Period – 5/1/02 – 4/30/03

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II. Project Summary

The need for appropriately prepared, high quality teachers of young children with disabilities has grown each year since early childhood special education (ECSE) services were implemented in the Miami-Dade County Public School System in 1978. The implementation of the mandates of Public Law 99-457 (EHA) and 101-476 (IDEA) – states that all states and territories must provide a free appropriate education to all children ages three to five who have disabilities-- has greatly expanded this need for qualified personnel on the national, state, and local level.

In addition, the State of Florida added a Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) component to their teacher certification requirements for all areas, as required by the State Board Rule 6A-4.0245, "Inservice Requirements for Personnel of Limited English Proficient Students" and State Board Rule 6A-4.0245, "Specialization Requirements for Certification in English for Speakers of Other Languages - Grade K-12." This recognizes the ever-increasing number of immigrants that arrive in Florida each year with children who have limited, or no proficiency in English language, and the need for teachers to have preparation in how to work effectively with this population of children and families. Specifically, in South Florida, there is an increasing number of Haitian Creole speaking students entering Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

The overall focus of this program was to improve the quality of personnel preparation in the State of Florida and in the nation by providing financial support for minority students, particularly those of Haitian background to participate in a preservice program at the master's degree level aimed at preparing highly skilled teachers of young children with disabilities, many of whom may come from homes where English is not the

only language. This proposed program provided tuition support (95%) and incentives (i.e. book stipend) to recruit highly needed minority personnel in the area of Early Childhood Special Education/Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ECSE/TESOL). While a portion of the coursework and field and practicum experiences focused on birth through age two infants and toddlers with disabilities, the major focus of the program was to prepare personnel to work with children with disabilities, ages 3-5, including those who may come from homes where English is not the only language.

This interdisciplinary personnel preparation program consisted of specialized courses in ECSE (12 credits), specialized courses in ESOL (15 credits), and a supervised practicum experience serving children with disabilities, ages three to five, in the public school system (3 credits). The major elements of the program included education in typical and atypical child growth and development, working with families, assessment and intervention with young children with disabilities, and working with culturally and linguistically diverse young children with disabilities and their families. Graduate students had the opportunity to see these elements in practice during their 40+ hours of field-based experience (observation and participation) in a variety of multicultural sites serving young children with and without disabilities and their families. Students also completed a full-time, six-week practicum in schools and centers serving young children with disabilities (birth to five) and their families in addition to rotations at community agencies and professional development seminars.

The ECSE program in Miami-Dade County is currently providing services for 1796 students, ages three to five, (69% male; 31% female) in 158 classrooms and in over 80 schools or community agencies. A significant proportion of the children in early

childhood special education classes in the Miami-Dade County Public School system are both minority (approximately 59% are Hispanic; 25% are Black, non-Hispanic; 14% are White, non-Hispanic; 1% are Multiracial and Asian) and Limited English Proficient (estimated at 54% of the Pre-Kindergarten Exceptional Student Education [ESE] programs).

With research and evaluation data pointing to the effectiveness of early intervention, and this recognition leading to the development of legislation at the state and federal level to expand ECSE programs, we can anticipate a dramatic increase in services for children with disabilities between birth and five years of age in the next several years. Florida, with its tremendous population explosion, can also expect the numbers of young children with disabilities, especially those from homes where English is not the only language, to increase dramatically. This personnel preparation program provides a steady flow of prepared, highly-qualified teachers who understand the special needs of children with disabilities, especially those who are also English language learners, from three to five years old, and who can provide the essential services with an awareness of the role and value of an interdisciplinary model and the role of the family.

III. Project Status

Objective 1. Recruit qualified graduate students that represent the diversity of South Florida and are interested in working with young children with special needs and their families.

Accomplishments:

The University of Miami developed a cooperative and comprehensive recruiting system that was outlined in previous continuation reports. Letters and flyers announcing

the program and available funding were mailed to all special education chairpersons, prekindergarten special education teachers, administrators, and early childhood teachers in elementary schools in both Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, and to agencies providing services to young children with and without disabilities and their families (e.g., Head Start, ARC, Easter Seals). The recipients of the mailings were invited to attend open houses to better familiarize them with the program. Announcements were also made in graduate and undergraduate classes, in the Newsletter sent to University of Miami ECSE students and Advisory Board members, and in the Hammond Times (a publication of the Office for Multicultural Student Affairs). In addition, advertisements were placed in the Miami Herald and in the newsletter of the United Teachers of Dade.

Key University administrators were informed of the program, including procedures for recruiting students, registration, and curriculum development. The key administrators included: Dean, School of Education; Chairperson, Teaching and Learning; Co-Directors of the Mailman Center, and the Principal of the Debbie School.

The Project Coordinator attended the Miami-Dade County New Teacher Orientation, the Quest Conference, and the "Been There, Done That" Conference hosted by the United Teachers of Dade. Furthermore, the Project Coordinator disseminated information at an Administrators' Management Meeting for special educators in the state of Florida, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Annual Conference in Toronto, and the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Conference in Chicago. As interested applicants inquired about the program, application packets were mailed to them. Following the initial application mailing, students received follow-up mailings that provided additional information about the program and the university.

Students who submitted a portion of the application received phone calls from either the Project Coordinator or a graduate assistant.

Outcomes: More than four hundred (400) application packets were mailed to prospective students during recruitment, which resulted in the recruitment of a highly diverse group of students. The grant originally stated that a total of 39 students would be recruited and graduate from the program. A total of 39 students received funding through this program totaling $441,684.10. This program will graduate a total of thirty-seven (37) students (37 part-time; 0 full-time). Twenty-eight (28) students have graduated from the program, and eight (8) students are currently enrolled. Of the eight (8) students currently enrolled, seven (7) are expected to graduate in August 2003 after completing their required coursework and program requirements (i.e., professional portfolio, oral examination, written comprehensive examination). A total of two (2) students had to drop the program for personal and academic reasons. An additional student's status is questionable. She still needs to submit a professional portfolio and participate in an oral and written comprehensive exam. Due to our inability to recruit eight (8) additional students, an additional three (3) students received their Pre-K Disabilities add-on Endorsement through this grant totaling $16,362.00. Due to increases in tuition costs and our inability to recruit five (5) more students, a remaining $87,570.14 in tuition costs will be returned to U.S.DOE.

Objective 2: Provide initial and ongoing advising, financial, and administrative support to the graduate students during their course of study.

Accomplishments:

Advisory support was provided by the Project Co-Directors, the Project Coordinator, and faculty members. Students met with their program faculty advisors to discuss their program of study and complete a course sequence plan. Prior to their first semester of study, students attended an orientation where they were familiarized with the University of Miami, the School of Education, and the ECSE/TESOL program. Moreover, group advising sessions were scheduled and coordinated each semester with students to assist them with the registration process.

Ongoing communication was maintained with the students through electronic mailings, the ECSE website, Blackboard, as well as quarterly newsletter designed to inform them of (a) events in the South Florida area as well as the rest of the country related to ECSE, (b) changes in legislation and policy related to ECSE, (c) procedures related to graduation and program completion, (d) the latest research in ECSE, and (d) upcoming conferences, seminars, institutes, and trainings. Students were also informed by telephone, letters, flyers posted on campus, and the ECSE Bulletin Board of events they were expected to attend. Additionally, the ECSE program hosted dinners each semester as well as ECSE "Conversations" twice a semester to better acquaint students with their faculty advisors, project staff, and peers in a non-threatening, social, and informal environment.

Financial management and the maintenance of all financial records were accomplished by the Project Fiscal Manager who works under the direction of the Project Co-Directors along with the Business Manager of the School of Education.

The Advisory Board met twice a year to: 1) discuss and review the competencies needed for teaching young students with disabilities and those who are also English language learners; 2) to discuss the portfolio, oral exam, and written comprehensive exam process; 3) provide feedback for the revisions of program guides and handbooks; and 4) complete questionnaires to identify areas in the program that needed improvement or change. Additionally, weekly meetings were held with the staff and Project Co-Directors to keep all personnel updated on various projects involved in the implementation of this program.

Another resource provided to the students in this program was the ECSE Resource Library. The library is continually updated and a list of all materials available. The materials available to students included relevant journals, books, screening and assessment instruments, curricula, and videotapes. A comprehensive evaluation of all videotapes in the library was conducted during the fall 2001 semester and an abstract was written and placed on the cover of each video.

Outcomes: Individual advisement led to an approved program of study for each student. The coursework of each student was evaluated and a course sequence plan was developed and approved for each student by his/her faculty advisor. This assured that all core competencies in the ECSE/TESOL program were met and that the field-based and practicum/internship experiences matched student's goals and interests. Students in this program, along with faculty and Advisory Board members, were kept informed through

the website, electronic communication, and newsletter. Additionally, the maintenance of the students' records in a graduate database allowed for ready access to current student records, which assisted in monitoring individual student goals. Monthly accounting reports provided by the Office of Sponsored Programs were the outcome of the budgetary actions.

The ECSE Resource Library currently contains 353 books, 82 screening/ assessment instruments, and 115 videotapes, as well as a number of brochures, journals, and newsletters. These materials represent current information available in the areas of: *early childhood education, special education, disabilities, child development, assessment, family support, curriculum, medical issues, diversity, and technology.* This library was an invaluable resource for supporting students in their coursework and faculty in their instruction. Moreover, the ECSE Multi-Media Center provided a private workstation in the ECSE office suite, conveniently located next to the ECSE Resource Library, the Project Coordinator, Program Assistant, and Project Co-Director. The center's hardware currently includes a AMD-K6 2/450 3D processor with 64 MB RAM, 32-bit file system, 32-bit virtual memory, CD-ROM, ZIP-100, Optiquest Q75 color monitor, HP Scanjet 4570c, Hp Laser Jet 1200 Series, one electric typewriter, and a cutting station for applications and forms.

Objective 3: Provide a high quality, interdisciplinary graduate degree program in Early Childhood Special Education with an emphasis on English Language Learners that will prepare teachers to effectively meet the individual needs of young at-risk and disabled children and their families from a multicultural community.

Accomplishments:

The program was designed to ensure that the graduate students meet Florida's endorsement requirements for early childhood special education (Pre-Kindergarten Disabilities) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). A course sequence plan was developed for each student in the program. In addition, students were involved in field-based and practicum/internship experiences working with diverse young children with disabilities (ages birth to five) and their families in a variety of private and public settings in the local community.

Students attended and participated in professional development seminars which included: 1) APA Style Writing (presenter: Dr. Jane Sinagub); 2) ECSE Portfolio Overview (presenter: Dr. Diana Valle-Riestra); 3) Developmentally Appropriate Practices (presenter: Palmina Ioannone); 4) The Culture of Education (presenter: Dr. Bruner); 5) Infant and Toddler Curricula (presenter: Dr. Mimi Graham); 6) High/Scope Curriculum (presenter: Zilkia Rodriguez); 7) American Sign Language (presenter: Sylvia Gonez); 8) Assistive Technology and the Prime Time Van (presenters: Sheila Miguel and Mariela Johnson); 9) Early Intervention, Inclusion, and the Natural Environment (presenter: Dr. Dana Fredebaugh); 10) "Young Bilinguals: Adding Languages or Subtracting?" (presenter: Barbara Pearson); 11) Family Support Plan (FSP) and the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) process (presenters: Millie Puig and Cecilia Nunez); 12) Feeding and Positioning (presenters: Vicki Burley and Marie Rodrigo); 13) Young Children with Autism (presenter: Judy Mesch); 14) Grandparents as Caregivers (presenter: Dr. Lynn Katz); 15) Conscious Discipline (presenter: Katja Von Elbe); 16) ESOL Language Development (presenter: Maggie Diaz); 17) "Parents Can Dream New

Dreams" (presenter: Dr. Stan Klein); 18) "Rethinking Parental Involvement in Multiple Contacts" (presenter: Dr. Patricia Edwards); 19) "I Can Problem Solve" (presenter: Dr. Bonnie Aberson); 20) PACES (presenter: M-DCPS- Human Resource Representative); 21) Professional Standards (presenter: M-DCPS- Human Resource Representative); 22) Reggio Emilia Curriculum (presenter: Dr. Angela Salmon; 23) Orientation for the General Early Intervention Community (presenter: Pat Donavan); 24) Children Without Parents"(presenter: Dr. B. Perlmutter; 25) Stories That Can Change the Way We Educate (presenter: Dr. Patricia Edwards); 26) Medical Issues and the Growing Child (presenters: Dr. Carole Abbott, Tania Diaz Fernandez, Dr. Helen Masin, and Dr. Lynne Katz); 27) Workshop on the ERIC database; 28) EH/SED Social Emotional Learning (presenters: Dr. Gary Lucas and Dr. Blanca Garcia); 29) Paint and Magic Noodle Seminar (presenters: Meryl Fischer and Dr. Liz Rothlein); 30) Parenting a Child with Disabilities (presenter: Barbara Rodriguez); 31) Assessment of Infants and Young Children (presenters: Joseph Jackson and Virginia Niles); 32) Multicultural Curriculum and Environment (presenter: Wilma DeMelendez); and 33) Sexual Abuse and Neglect (presenter: Brenda Taggart).

Students were also involved in field-based and practicum/internship experiences working with young children with disabilities (ages birth to three) and their families in a variety of private and public settings in the local community during their summer agency rotation. In addition, three (3) students received funding to attend professional conferences or workshops (Division of Early Childhood (DEC); Council for Exceptional Children (CEC); and Children's Hospital in Boston for the Clinical Neonatal Behavioral

Assessment Scale (CLNBAS) workshop), and three students participated in a field trip to Island Dolphin Care to learn about dolphin-assisted therapy.

Meetings with the Project Co-Directors, the core ECSE and TESOL faculty, and the Teaching and Learning (TAL) Department Chair were held to assure that all core competencies were being met. Additionally, the meetings were used by the Project-Directors to receive feedback on the ECSE/TESOL Professional Portfolio, which is used to evaluate whether students have adequately mastered the competencies of the ECSE portion of the ECSE/TESOL program as well as the State's standards for teacher preparation (i.e., Twelve Accomplished Practices). The ECSE team also scheduled semester meetings to orient adjunct faculty members teaching courses in the ECSE/TESOL program.

Outcomes: All students in the ECSE/TESOL program were enrolled in courses that follow a specified program of study to ensure students received both the coursework and the field-based and practicum/internship experiences necessary to meet the needs of young children with disabilities who may be English language learners and their families.

All students in the program also completed the ECSE/TESOL Professional Portfolio and participated in an Oral and Written Comprehensive Examination as culminating requirements for successful completion of the program.

Objective 4: Maintain student records and financial accounts.

Accomplishments:

Financial accounts were reviewed weekly and reports were generated for the Project Co-Directors. The Project Fiscal Manager managed orders for materials as well as

student accounts. Student records are maintained in a graduate database that allowed for ready access to current student information.

Outcomes: The Project Fiscal Manager was responsible for expenditure control for staff and students (i.e. reimbursements) as well as processing payroll for all personnel. She also processed tuition support statements for each student every semester. Necessary budget revisions were made as per US Department of Education's request. Moreover, students funded under this grant were required to provide special education and related services to children with disabilities for a period of two years for every year for which student financial assistance was received or repayment of all or part of the cost of that assistance, in accordance with section 673(h)(1) of the Act and the regulations in 34 CFR part 304. During the entrance interview process, initial advising, and at the exit interview, students were notified verbally and in writing of this requirement. Also, a variety of service obligation forms and agreements have been developed in order to inform potential and enrolled students of the service obligation requirement. Forms and agreements have been reviewed and approved by the University's Office of the General Counsel. Service obligation summary reports are generated periodically to accurately track students. Employment verification forms are sent to program graduates once per year reminding them of their obligation. Ten (10) graduated students have completed their service obligation. One (1) graduated student has two (2) months of service obligation remaining. One (1) graduated student has three (3) months of service obligation remaining. Three (3) graduated students have seven (7) months of service obligation remaining. Two (2) graduated students have nine (9) months of service obligation remaining. One (1) graduated student has ten (10) months of service obligation

remaining. Three (3) graduated students have eleven (11) months of service obligation remaining. The remaining seven (7) graduated students funded under this program have yet to submit their completed employment verification forms to the ECSE/TESOL Program office.

Objective 5: Evaluate the program and make necessary revisions.

Accomplishments:

Faculty advisors and Project Co-Directors were engaged in ongoing monitoring of the program in order to stay apprised of program quality and student satisfaction. Student feedback was regularly encouraged and collected via focus group interviews, program surveys/questionnaires, and email and telephone dialogues. Written evaluations were also completed during group advising sessions. The purpose of these evaluations is two-fold: (1) to assure that the students are successfully meeting the program core competencies and State standards, and (2) to determine students' levels of satisfaction with the program. Additionally, informal meetings with students and the Project Coordinator and Program Assistant have been followed up with meetings between TAL faculty and the Project Co-Directors. The following information was collected during the 2001-02 academic year.

ECSE/TESOL Survey - Spring, 2001, and Fall 2001

Of the students enrolled in the ECSE/TESOL program, nineteen (n=19) students completed a survey during the Spring 2001, and thirteen (n=13) students completed a survey during the Fall 2001. Survey data focused on sample characteristics and

evaluating aspects of the program including program coursework, faculty, staff, and advisors.

Demographic information (Spring, 2001). Of the students that completed the survey in the Spring of 2001 (n=19), sixteen are female and two are male. One student did not respond. Forty-seven percent are Hispanic, 37% White, 11% Black, non-Hispanic, and 5% did not respond. The majority of students had certification in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) (68%) specifically in the areas of Varying Exceptionalities (VE), Mentally Retarded (MR), and Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). Other areas of certification included Early Childhood Education (26%), Elementary Education (11%), Pre-K/Primary (5%), and Reading (5%). Fifteen students are currently teaching in a public school setting, two in private settings, and two in other settings (i.e., faith-based). Of those working, twelve are ESE teachers, four are ECSE teachers, and three are General Education (GE) teachers. The average total number of years of teaching for the sample is 5.9. Only two students had completed their practicum/internship experience at the time of completion of the survey.

Demographic information (Fall, 2001). Of the thirteen students who completed the survey, 100% are female. Thirty-eight percent are Hispanic, 38% White, 16% Black, non-Hispanic, and 8% indicated Other. The majority of students had certification in ESE (85%) with field specialties in SLD, MR, VE, Emotionally Handicapped (EH), and Educable Mentally Handicapped (EMH). Other areas of certification included Elementary Education (15%), Reading (15%), Pre-K/Primary (8%), and Montessori (8%). Eleven students are currently teaching in a public school, one student is in a private school setting, and one is in an agency setting. Of those working, eleven are ESE

teachers, one is a GE teacher, and one indicated "Other". The average total number of years of teaching for the sample is 6.4.

Program/Coursework (Spring, 2001). Eighty-four percent of students who completed the survey agreed that the program had assisted them in mastering the needed skills, concepts, facts, and knowledge needed in the field of ECSE/TESOL and would recommend the program to a friend. Identified strengths of the program included: (a) the high quality of instructors; (b) accessibility of instructors to students; (c) the Project Coordinator; and (d) support services (i.e., APA seminar and ECSE library) offered by the program. Overall, 74% of students who responded to the survey felt prepared to organize and implement a program for young children with disabilities who are also English language learners.

The majority of students reported that they were highly satisfied with the overall content and quality of the ECSE courses (84%) and indicated that the ECSE courses integrated both practical and theoretical principles. In contrast, students expressed lower levels of satisfaction with the overall content and quality of the TESOL courses (68%) and the integration of practice and theory in these courses (74%). Students shared that they wanted to see improvements in the TESOL component of the program specifically in having regular meetings with adjunct faculty members teaching the courses and discussing with them expectations about course requirements.

Although the majority of students were satisfied with their coursework and felt it was effective, many students perceived that their courses were "*rushed*" especially those that were scheduled during the summer semesters. Moreover, some students had difficulty with the scheduling of courses and seminars and recommended that the Project

Coordinator, and the faculty be encouraged to have "*late day*" office hours and that professional development seminars be held on weekends (i.e., Saturdays). Refer to Appendix A for a summary of all survey items.

Program/Coursework (Fall, 2001). The majority of students (83%) who completed the survey agreed that the program had assisted them in mastering the needed skills and knowledge in the field of ECSE/TESOL and 73% would recommend the program to a friend. One student commented, "*Overall, the ECSE/TESOL program has provided me the education needed to be an effective educator.*"

All students reported that they were highly satisfied with the overall content and quality of the ECSE courses and that the ECSE courses integrated both practical and theoretical principles. In contrast, they expressed low levels of satisfaction with the overall content and quality of the TESOL courses (46%) and the integration of practice and theory in these courses (39%). Students commented, *"I have been very disappointed in my class, TAL 653. I feel that the teacher has not been able to educate me on the material in which this course consists of."* and *"The TAL 653 class does not relate to activities, strategies or problems presented in a classroom with ESOL students."* In addition, one student suggested that new faculty be observed early in the program (semester) to alleviate future concerns.

All students indicated that the program had addressed their individual needs appropriately and that they felt prepared to participate in the assessment process. The majority of students had taken advantage of the support services offered (92%). Seventy-seven percent of students either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the ECSE/TESOL program had prepared them to work with young children with disabilities

who are also English language learners. Refer to Appendix B for a summary of all survey items.

Faculty/Staff/Advisors (Spring, 2001). Eighty-four percent of the students who completed the survey were satisfied with the quality of instruction provided by the ECSE faculty and 89% felt the ECSE faculty was accessible to them. Seventy-four percent of students were satisfied with the quality of instruction provided by the TESOL faculty and 89% also felt that the TESOL faculty was accessible to them. The majority of students agreed that the Project Coordinator, and the program faculty advisors were accessible to them (80% and 74% respectively).

Faculty/Staff/Advisors (Fall, 2001). Students who completed the survey were satisfied with the personnel involved in the program and their accessibility to them. In addition, students expressed that the new project coordinator was quite knowledgeable about the program. The following representative quotes were written by students, "*I am elated that I have a new project coordinator who is very knowledgeable about the program,*" and "*I feel very well informed and ready to complete my program.*" All students either strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that the program faculty advisors and the Project Coordinator were accessible and assisted them in answering questions about the program and their program of study. All of the students indicated that they felt the ECSE faculty was accessible while 58% felt the TESOL faculty was accessible. All students were satisfied with the overall quality of instruction provided by the ECSE faculty, whereas only 38% were satisfied with the quality of instruction provided by the TESOL faculty.

Open Ended Questionnaire - Spring, 2002

Students completed a questionnaire (n=23) during their spring advising session with four open-ended questions that focused on the program quality and recommendations for improvement. At the time of the survey, students had completed an average of 16 credits.

Program Quality. Students were asked to identify the top three strengths of their program, areas in need of improvement, and describe the effectiveness of coursework and activities.

The major strengths of the program identified were (a) the project coordinator/advising (n=14); (b) faculty (n=13); (c) course content (n=5); (d) evening courses (n=4); and (e) seminars (n=3). Other identified strengths were resources, support, flexibility of practicum/internship experience, cost, and receiving two endorsements upon completion.

The major areas of the program identified by students as needing improvement included (a) portfolio (n=5); (b) none (n=5); (c) TESOL (n=4); (d) flexibility for working teachers (n=3); and (e) consistency of information (n=2). Other areas identified by students included too many meetings, too much work, and more personal communication from faculty. Students shared, "*Portfolio requirements should reflect more of the class projects that are required in each course*" and "*I feel the program is complete.*"

The majority of the students (87%) who responded to the question regarding the effectiveness of the content and activities of the courses (n=15) agreed that the courses have been effective. One student remarked, "*All coursework was reflective of current research. I am eager to go out into the field and put all my acquired skills into practice.*"

Program recommendations. Students were asked to provide recommendations/suggestions to the ECSE Area Committee. Suggestions included:

- Reduce the amount of work in the portfolio;
- More flexibility for working students;
- Make assignments more practical, "hands-on";
- Be more specific about program requirements; and
- Separate ECSE/TESOL students from TESOL students in classes.

Survey of Graduate Students in TAL- Spring 2002

Students in the ECSE/TESOL program (n=22) completed a survey during the Spring 2002 sent to all graduate students in the department of Teaching and Learning (TAL). Survey questions focused on program coursework, faculty, advisors, preparedness for the workplace, and overall quality. Students were also asked to comment on program strengths and weaknesses and to share suggestions for program improvement.

Coursework. The majority of students agreed that (a) that the program integrates both practical applications and theoretical principles (100%); (b) the course offerings meet their perceived professional needs (96%); and (c) that the overall content and quality of courses taken in this program is either equal to or better than the quality of coursework taken at other universities or with which the students are familiar (87%).

Faculty/Advisors. Overall students reported being satisfied with the personnel in their program. The majority of students (96%) rated the quality of advising as above average, and felt that the faculty is accessible. The majority of the students (87%) also agreed that the quality of the faculty is above average. One student shared "*This program has cooperative teachers and a wonderful faculty.*"

Preparedness for the workplace. The majority of students in the program reported that they felt prepared to: (a) teach the content in their subject area (100%); (b) implement effective instructional practices (100%); (c) teach students with cultural and linguistic differences (100%); (d) teach students with disabilities (95%); and (e) implement technology in the classroom (92%) as a result of the program.

Overall quality. The majority of the students who completed the survey agreed that the program was above average quality (82%) and that they felt comfortable recommending the program to a friend (82%).

Strengths/Weaknesses and Recommendations. Identified areas of strength in the program included faculty, advising, scheduling, resources, peer rapport, and two endorsements. One student commented, "*It is a wonderful opportunity to gain two endorsements into one and be able to work in those areas after graduation.*" Identified weaknesses and areas for improvement in the program included portfolio, assignments, flexibility, and TESOL instructors. Students recommended, "*Integrate portfolio assignments with each course.*" and "*Make the assignments more meaningful and realistic.*"

Practicum/Internship Experience Evaluation – Summer, 2001 and Summer 2002

Four-Week Practicum/Internship Experience

Students in the program completed a survey in the summer 2001 (n=22) and in the summer 2002 (n=34) with Likert-type items and open-ended questions. Survey questions focused on students' perceptions of their **four-week practicum/internship** experience in a Prekindergarten (Pre-K) ESE classroom working with young children with disabilities and their families, ages three to five, or a specialized placement.

Specifically, students were asked about their perceptions of the practicum/internship setting, university supervisor, and clinical supervisor.

Perceptions of practicum/internship settings – (Summer 2001). All students either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt prepared to enter their practicum/internship experience (100%), and the majority (91%) also believed their practicum/internship setting was useful in meeting their career goals, provided them with experiences that were educationally challenging and stimulating, and that the school and personnel understood the nature and purpose of their role as practicum students. Eighty-six percent responded that their practicum/internship experience provided opportunities for them to learn how to teach young children with disabilities. Many students recommended their setting for placing future practicum students and perceived the practicum/internship experience to be positive and rewarding. Students shared the following quotes: "*I would recommend this internship experience to another student because of the support and guidance that I received from this internship setting*"; "*I think all aspects of my internship were positive and rewarding. The setting was challenging, interesting, and with a great deal of new information*"; and "*I had an outstanding experience this summer. I was given the opportunity to utilize all the knowledge and strategies that I have learned in the ECSE program.*"

Additionally, one student shared her thought about the importance of having students complete a practicum/internship experience even those with teaching experience, "*I was thrilled with my internship placement. At first I did not think this internship was necessary because I was already a teacher. However, I was completely wrong. I was*

exposed to so much information when it comes to Pre-K ESE. I was very thankful for this opportunity and believe everyone should have such an enjoyable experience."

A few students identified areas of weaknesses within their practicum/internship experience and these included (a) the short number of weeks in the practicum/internship experience making it not the "*reality*"; (b) the lack of structure and organization at one particular specialized setting; and (c) clearer guidelines as to the specific obligations and requirements needed to complete the practicum/internship experience as outlined in the practicum/internship handbook and portfolio guides. One student commented, "*What I would also recommend is that…specific obligations are written for both to see. My specialized placement handbook was outdated and did not specify what requirements are necessary to meet the portfolio requirements. When (my supervisor) gave me information it was not acceptable to ECSE [Committee]. These things need to be clearly specified.*"

Perceptions of practicum/internship settings – (Summer 2002). All students either strongly agreed or agreed that (a) their practicum setting was useful in meeting their career goals; (b) their practicum provided them with opportunities to learn how to teach young children with disabilities; (c) their practicum/internship provided experiences that were educationally challenging and stimulating; and (d) that the school and personnel understood the nature and purpose of their role as practicum students. Additionally, a vast majority of students responded that they felt prepared to enter their practicum experience (97%). Many students recommended their setting for placing future practicum students and perceived the practicum/internship experience to be positive and rewarding. Students shared the following quotes: "*This experience gave me a great understanding of the way in which High/Scope works. I also came away with valuable ideas and knowledge for*

working in my own class"; "*The entire setting was phenomenal. My placement allowed me to really understand and see how everything fit together: the schedule, pictures, technology...*" and "*I loved the internship! My teacher was an excellent model for me. I had a great experience getting to interact with the children and learning hands-on about High/Scope.*"

A few students expressed concerns about their practicum/internship. One student who stated that her "*internship experience was wonderful*" expressed concerns about her placement in a Profoundly Mentally Handicapped (PMH) setting. She commented "*I feel I learned a great deal in regards to positioning, OT/PT, etc... however, I feel I missed out on experiencing the High/Scope curriculum, outdoor activities and other developmentally appropriate practices that occur in perhaps VE/Autistic setting.*" Another student remarked, "*I would not recommend this practicum/internship due to the fact the experience was too short.*" Furthermore, one student commented, "*I did not feel challenged during my practicum/internship. I've been a teacher for 8 years and feel qualified to teach children of all ages.*"

Perceptions of university supervisors – (Summer, 2001). All students either strongly agreed or agreed that their university supervisor was (a) available to them for direct supervision and consultation; (b) understood their professional and personal needs for learning and experiencing; and (c) provided them with meaningful, timely, and constructive feedback. Ninety-five percent of students responded that their university supervisors were able to give them sufficient independence to accomplish goals and 86% believed their university supervisor modeled the technical skills and professional competence necessary to teach young children. Many students commented about the

willingness of university supervisors to help and assist them during their practicum/internship experience and their high level of understanding and feedback. One student shared, "*(My supervisor) was extremely supportive and helpful. She offered great advice and constructive criticism. I enjoyed having her come into class and learned a great deal from the anecdotes she shared about her classroom experience.*" Another student commented, "*I feel she was capable and understanding of what interns need in regards to information and support.*"

Perceptions of university supervisors – (Summer, 2002). All students either strongly agreed or agreed that their university supervisor (a) was available to them for direct supervision and consultation; (b) was able to give them sufficient independence to accomplish their goals; (c) provided them with meaningful, timely, and constructive feedback; and (d) modeled the consultation skills and professional competence necessary to teach young children with disabilities and to work with others in the field. The majority of students (97%) also felt that their university supervisor understood their professional and personal needs for learning and experiencing. Many students stated that they would recommend their supervisor to future practicum students. They commented that their supervisors were very supportive and encouraging, and provided excellent feedback. One student shared, "*She was very positive about my teaching and gave suggestions in a non-threatening way. She was always available for me and made me feel like she was truly interested in what I gained from the experience. I loved her immediate feedback.*" Another student commented, "*My university supervisor was my rock.*"

One student expressed a concern with her supervisor's timeliness in providing feedback. She commented, "*I felt that there were a couple of instances where a less than timely manner of feedback was given. We never did go over the final evaluation.*"

Perceptions of clinical supervisors – (Summer, 2001). The majority of students either strongly agreed or agreed that clinical supervisors (a) were available to them for direct supervision and consultation (95%); (b) were able to provide sufficient independence to accomplish goals (95%); (c) understood their professional and personnel needs for learning and experiencing (91%); (d) provided them with meaningful, timely, and constructive feedback (91%); and (e) modeled the technical skills and professional competence necessary to teach young children (91%). Many students commented that their clinical supervisor provided them with ample opportunities to implement their ideas and encouraged them to be independent in the classroom. One student said, "*She answered every one of my questions and provided me with constructive feedback. She shared all of her experiences and materials with me. She showed me the Pre-K handbook and the High/Scope handbook. She gave me all of the freedom and guidance I needed, allowed me to write key note experiences, and lesson plans. It was a wonderful experience!*" Moreover, many students noted that they would recommend their clinical supervisor to other practicum students. One student shared, "*I would recommend this clinical supervisor to future interns. She exhibits appropriate adult/child interaction and [is] competent in leadership skills.*"

Perceptions of clinical supervisors- (Summer, 2002). All of the students (100%) either strongly agreed or agreed that their clinical supervisors (a) were available to them for direct supervision and consultation; (b) were able to provide sufficient independence

to accomplish goals; (c) understood their professional and personnel needs for learning and experiencing; and (d) provided them with meaningful, timely, and constructive feedback. In addition, the vast majority of students felt that their clinical supervisor modeled the consultation skills and professional competence necessary to teach young children (97%) and that overall the supervision received was adequate and helpful (97%). Many students commented that their clinical supervisor was an excellent role model and very supportive. One student said, "*(My supervisor) was an excellent resource person and guide. She taught me stimulating and creative ways to engage all learners in the educational process.*" Another student commented, "*(My supervisor) was very supportive.... He even burned CD's for my future class.*" Furthermore, many students stated that they would recommend their Clinical Supervisor to future practicum students. One student stated, "*(My supervisor) is an outstanding teacher. She allowed me to incorporate ideas and provided me with assistance and accessibility. She employs developmentally appropriate strategies and activities.*"

Two-Week Rotation Experience

Students in the program completed a survey in the summer 2001 (n=22) and summer 2002 (n=35) with Likert-type items and open-ended questions. Survey questions focused on students' perceptions of their **two-week rotation** experience in a variety of private and public local agencies, schools, and organizations providing services to young children with disabilities (predominately 0-2) and their families. Specifically, students were asked about their perceptions of the rotation settings and their recommendations for retaining these rotation settings for the future as well as other settings that would be beneficial and insightful to future practicum students.

Perceptions of the rotation settings – (Summer 2001). Ninety-five percent of the students either strongly agreed or agreed that the two-week rotation provided opportunities to learn about local resources available to them as teachers who are working with young children with disabilities and their families. The majority of students felt that one of the major strengths of this rotation experience was that they were exposed to a large variety of agencies, schools, or organizations that provided services to young children with disabilities and their families. Students shared, "*We saw several centers that provide various services for children. I didn't know many of these places existed and now I know which kids to refer to which services. I learned about evaluating children and made several contacts, especially at FDLRS*" and "*The strengths are that we got the opportunity to visit and get tours of special facilities – to then be able to refer parents to.*" Additionally, 91% of the students felt prepared to enter their two-week rotation experience.

However, only 50% of students responded that the two-week rotation provided experiences that were educationally challenging and stimulating. Moreover, 41% of students either strongly disagreed or disagreed that the agencies, schools, or organizations understood the nature and purpose of their role and responsibilities as students in the rotation experience. Many students commented that the scheduling of visits to these agencies, schools, or organizations was an area that needed to be revisited and improved by the ECSE program. This student shared the following comment, "*The University must also work out better scheduling to avoid 'down times' such as having a full day of no interactions [with students] due to a teacher workday.*" Another student said, "*The summer is not really 'regular' and the day was long. I got much from the morning*

routines; however in the afternoon the children nap – especially because its early childhood and time was wasted. I realize that this is a good time for the teachers to talk to us. But some did not wish to." Students recommended scheduling two or more schools/agencies on the same day.

Many students were also concerned about the degree to which these agencies, schools, or organizations understood their roles and responsibilities as university students during the two-week rotation. The majority of students felt that the contact person on-site lacked clarity about who the students were, what their purpose was at the site, and what they were expected to complete as part of the rotation. One student said, "*There was no clarity of the roles of the [university] students at the facility. I felt that at a couple of sites we were in the way and disrupted the director's schedule for hours.*" Another student commented, "*Many of the site supervisors didn't know what we were supposed to do.*" Students recommended limiting the number of sites to visit during the entire two-week rotation as to decrease the amount of scheduling demands and burdens on the site contact person and having more than one contact person at each site to take the lead in orientating the university students during the rotation.

Perceptions of the rotation settings – (Summer 2002). Eighty-six percent of students either strongly agreed or agreed that the two-week rotation provided opportunities to learn about local resources available to them as teachers who are working with young children with disabilities and their families. Furthermore, eighty-three percent of students either strongly agreed or agreed that the two-week rotation provided them with the knowledge to rate the quality of an early childhood facility. One student commented, "*It reinforces my ability to analyze each facility and ponder the idea,*

if it were my classroom, I." Seventy-four percent of students either strongly agreed or agreed that the rotation provided experiences that were educationally challenging and stimulating. The majority of students felt that one of the major strengths of this rotation experience was the exposure to a variety of community resources and classroom settings that provided services to young children with disabilities and their families. Students shared, "*Being exposed to the different centers was an excellent experience because I had the opportunity to witness the diversity of care out in the community*" and *"I believe that the two week rotation gave me the experience needed to be familiar with the different agencies available for children with disabilities. I also enjoyed observing the different therapists available."*

Many students reported satisfaction with their preparedness for their two-week rotation. Eighty-six percent of students either strongly agreed or agreed that they understood their assignments. Seventy-five percent of students either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt prepared to enter their rotation, and 68% either strongly agreed or agreed that the orientation assisted in preparing them for the rotation. However, students felt that the agencies could have been better prepared for their visit. Only 48% of students either strongly agreed or agreed that the agencies, schools, or organizations understood the nature and purpose of their role and responsibilities as students in the rotation experience. One student shared the following suggestion "*Making the staff aware of our role. Many teachers and paraprofessionals were not aware of what we were doing there. Some didn't look at us or talk to us and some left us in the classroom for many minutes."* Students also indicated that there was a need for better coordination between the university and the sites. One student commented, "*Some of the centers were not*

prepared for the large number of students coming. We felt we were imposing in some instances." Students also recommended making changes in the scheduling of the rotations. Some students suggested splitting the practicum/internship into one week before and one week after the summer school rotation. Other students were concerned about the strict time guidelines. One student remarked *"The only area I feel that needs improvement are the hours required at each center. I feel there is no reason to stay at these centers once children lay down for their nap."* Another student observed that, *"Some of the agencies were not equipped to provide assistance to students for so many hours."* Many students also recommended spending only one day at each center, especially at FDLRS-S, and a few students mentioned that Prescribed Pediatric Emergency Care (PPEC) should be a half-day only; however, it must be noted that two students shared that they would have preferred being assigned to one site for the entire rotation. Moreover, students remarked that they would have liked to have the opportunity to request the programs that were of interest to them.

Recommended sites for rotations – (Summer, 2001). The majority of students recommended the following sites for future consideration for the two-week rotation: (1) neonatal intensive care unit; (2) juvenile detention center; (3) United Cerebral Palsy; (4) Linda Ray; (5) Lighthouse for the Blind; and (6) MacLamore.

Recommended sites for rotations – (Summer, 2002). The majority of students recommended the following sites for future consideration for the two-week rotation: (1) PPEC; (2) court; (3) Linda Ray; (4) Debbie School; and (5) FDLRS-S (for one day only). Although some students shared that they would recommend all of the sites that they visited, other students specifically mentioned sites that they would not recommend for

future rotations. Those that were specifically mentioned by a few students were: (1) ARC; (2) Easter Seals; (3) UCP; and (4) Headstart. It must be noted that one student recommended Head Start as a future site and another student remarked, ***"Easter Seals was not an example of a quality center, but I still think it was a valuable experience."***

Advisory Board Evaluation Feedback-Spring, 2001 and Fall, 2001

Spring, 2001. A total of eight (n=8) surveys were completed by Advisory Board members. Members range from being directors of programs providing direct services to children with disabilities and their families, to professors in teacher education programs. Seventy-five percent of the members felt that graduates of the program are prepared to be effective ECSE teachers and have the necessary skills (i.e., teaching and working with families). Furthermore, 87.5% of the members agreed that Advisory Board meetings are an important and worthwhile component of the program and provide the program with advice about future directions to take.

Identified strengths of the program included: (a) key personnel in the program; (b) the practicum/internship experience; and (c) student support in the form of tuition assistance. Members shared the following comments, *"The Co-Directors of the ECSE program are significant strengths. The attention to meeting students' needs and assuring that they are knowledgeable and well-prepared professionals"* and *"The internship experience offers opportunity to implement knowledge acquired. Clinical teachers are supportive and knowledgeable."*

Suggestions for improvement included: (a) a practicum/internship orientation meeting with the University of Miami supervisors to review guidelines and requirements; (b) longer practicum/internships; (c) hands-on workshops on feeding, positioning, and

handling medically fragile children; (d) administering assessment instruments; and (e) constructing classroom materials. For example, one Advisory Board member commented, "*Each student must give a battery of assessments to a child or a few children – include LAP-D, Early LAP, RLDC or OLPS (for LEP children). Also, use PQA from High/Scope and assess a learning environment. Develop a behavior management plan for a specific (real) child in a class and try to implement with teacher. Make some song boards, nursery rhyme boards, story boards, to be used during first month of school.*"

Fall, 2001. ECSE Advisory Board members were asked to complete a questionnaire providing feedback for program improvement. A total of seven (n=7) questionnaires were completed by members including directors and staffing specialists from programs that provide direct services to young children with disabilities and their families and a practicum/internship supervisor. Three of the respondents indicated that they had ECSE students as practicum students in their program this year. All of the respondents agreed that graduates of the ECSE program are prepared to be effective ECSE teachers and indicated that they would recommend that other professionals and agencies hire graduates of the ECSE program. Members shared the following comments: "*Quality program;*" "*Dedicated, serious professional attitudes and solid knowledge base;*" "*The students are able to set credentials in this state when they graduate from this program;*" and "*The program is well established and is staffed by individuals with extensive knowledge of the field.*"

Identified strengths of the program included (a) faculty; (b) diversity of the students; and (c) community partnerships linking theory and practice. Advisory Board members commented: "*The new faculty appears to be very dynamic to add to the*

expertise that exists," and *"They collaborate with M-DCPS to offer theory along with practice. The educational program is not presented in isolation."*

Identified areas in need of improvement included (a) more time for students to internalize concepts; (b) critically reviewing journal articles; and (c) the practicum/internship experience. One Advisory Board member gave the following suggestion, "*Arrange classes and experiences so students can do practica during the 8:00 – 2:00 traditional programming hours."* Another member who identified summer practicum/internships as needing improvement also stated, "*Steps have already [been taken] for improvement."*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some recommendations from students for program improvement are outlined below:

1. Improvements need to be made in the content and quality of the TESOL courses and the professors need to do a better job of integrating theory with practice. Many students were specifically concerned with TAL 653. "The TAL 653 class does not relate to activities, strategies or problems presented in a classroom with ESOL students."

OUTCOME:

ECSE Project Personnel scheduled a meeting with two faculty members who teach TESOL courses to review their course syllabi and assignments. It was recommended that TAL 653, Applied Linguistics in Education, follow the course description that currently targets phonology, morphology, and syntax of language system, specifically as they apply to learning disabilities, common

language disorders, and programs in preschool, reading, and bilingual education. Moreover, one assignment will be designed to link this topic to an issue in early childhood and special education.

2. New faculty should be observed early in the semester to ensure appropriate instruction.

OUTCOME:

It is the responsibility of the Department of Teaching and Learning (TAL) to provide an initial orientation and follow-up for newly hired faculty to ensure that course objectives are being met and the course syllabi are being followed. It is the feeling of the ECSE Area Committee that the Department of TAL hires the most qualified and competent individuals to teach with input and feedback from the program. The ECSE Area Committee will recommend to the Department Chair that scheduled meetings with newly hired faculty be made to ensure that appropriate instruction is taking place.

3. TESOL courses in the ECSE/TESOL program should be separate from courses in the TESOL program.

OUTCOME:

The ECSE Area Committee believes that it is important to integrate the TESOL and ECSE/TESOL programs. TESOL and ECSE/TESOL strategies often cross paths and can lead to stronger instruction. The ECSE Area Committee has recommended on several occasions to the TESOL faculty that a portion of the

course be used to specifically address Early Childhood Special Education. Semester meetings are held between the ECSE Area Committee and TESOL faculty to review ECSE portfolio assignments and program requirements so that faculty is familiar with what is expected of the ECSE students. Also, a member of the TESOL faculty is invited every semester to participate as a reviewer on the students' professional portfolio and oral exam.

4. Students would like to see more flexibility in the program for working individuals.

OUTCOME:

Courses are currently scheduled from 5:00 pm-7:40 pm to accommodate students who are currently teaching in the public schools, grades K-12. During the summer semesters is the only time classes begin at 4:25 pm. Furthermore, to access key project personnel or faculty members, e-mail communication is used on a regular and ongoing basis. When the ECSE/TESOL Area Committee meets with professors to share an overview of the ECSE/TESOL program, the professors are encouraged to communicate with students via e-mail since the ECSE/TESOL students are required to check their e-mails weekly as per their Student Responsibilities. The ECSE/TESOL Project Personnel will provide the professors with the e-mail addresses and phone numbers of the students registered in their particular classes to facilitate and enhance professor/student communication. Also, the ECSE/TESOL office is open until 5:00 pm Monday thru Friday; however, if a student calls in advance, ECSE/TESOL Project Personnel will keep the office open to meet with students as late as necessary.

For example, The Project Coordinator generally stays until 6:25pm each Monday during the fall and spring semesters to assist students in the program and answer questions. In addition, if students need to use the ECSE Library located in the ECSE/TESOL office suite during a weekend, ECSE/TESOL Project Personnel will make arrangements to meet them.

5. Program requirements need to be specific and consistent.

OUTCOME:

The ECSE/TESOL Portfolio Guide and Practicum/Internship Experience Handbook are updated each fall semester for the incoming cohort(s). Meetings are held to discuss program requirements for the professional portfolio as well as expectations and assignments that need to be completed during the student's supervised practicum/internship experience. Project staff encourages students to bring in their "work-in-progress" for review and feedback.

6. The professional portfolio should be abridged and modified to reflect course content and integrate more classroom assignments.

OUTCOME:

All students in the ECSE/TESOL programs are expected to meet the ECSE Core Competencies as well as the State of Florida's Twelve (12) Accomplished Practices as outlined in the Professional Portfolio guide. These competencies and practices are acquired through coursework, observation, and experience teaching during field-based and practicum/internship experiences. It is the

ECSE/TESOL program's philosophy that the Professional Portfolio present more than a collection of coursework, but also an extension of coursework via application- based assignments where research is put into practice and critical areas like development, literacy, culture, and diversity are highlighted and addressed. The ECSE/TESOL Portfolio Guide is updated each fall semester for the incoming cohort(s). Project Personnel invite professors to provide input and recommend portfolio assignments, in theory and practice that they feel are crucial to their particular course.

7. Improve the scheduling of visits, and the coordination and communication between the university and the sites during the two-week rotation experience.

OUTCOME:

The ECSE Area Committee will review the two-week rotation experience and refine it to meet the expectations of the Practicum Students as well as that of the agency. The ECSE Area Committee has met with the Advisory Board to gather their feedback and recommendations to better improve and plan activities that meet the professional development needs of our students.

Some recommendations from the evaluator for program improvement are outlined below:

1. Review and revise the course outlines for the TESOL courses and discuss student concerns with the faculty teaching the courses.

OUTCOME:

The ECSE Area Committee has reviewed all course outlines in the ECSE program in accordance with the changes that are being made to the state certification requirements. The ECSE Project Personnel made recommendations/suggestions to be considered by both the Department of TAL and its faculty. It was recommended that the individual faculty members carefully review the Project Personnel suggestions and their course syllabus to ensure the information is interpreted correctly. The ECSE Area Committee will meet with TAL faculty to clarify any recommendations.

2. Modify the professional portfolio using student input. For example, invite a group of students to participate in a focus group in which they provide specific suggestions for revising the professional portfolio.

OUTCOME:

All students in the ECSE master's degree programs are expected to meet the ECSE Core Competencies as well as the State of Florida's Twelve (12) Accomplished Practices as outlined in the Professional Portfolio guide. These competencies and practices are acquired through coursework, observation, and experience teaching during field-based and practicum/internship experiences. It

is the ECSE program's philosophy that the Professional Portfolio present more than a collection of coursework, but also an extension of coursework via application-based assignments where research is put into practice and critical areas like development, literacy, culture, and diversity are highlighted and addressed. The ECSE Portfolio Guides are updated each fall semester for the incoming cohort(s). Project Personnel invite professors to provide input and recommend portfolio assignments, in theory and practice that they feel are crucial to their particular course. Project Personnel will invite students to a Focus Group/Conversation so they are able to provide input and make specific suggestions for revisions to the professional portfolio.

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